

**DEPARTMENT OF ALCOHOL AND DRUG PROGRAMS**

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**OFFICE OF PROBLEM GAMBLING LAUNCHES STATEWIDE TRAINING PROGRAM FOR PROBLEM GAMBLING**

SACRAMENTO – The California Department of Alcohol and Drug Program's Office of Problem Gambling (OPG) launched a statewide campaign to train substance abuse counselors, mental health care providers, social workers and probation officers on recognizing the signs of problem gambling and its impact on individuals, families, and community.

"This training program is a critical step towards building a statewide comprehensive problem gambling prevention program in California and to help problem and pathological gamblers and their families," said Steve Hedrick, Deputy Director of the OPG.

As part of the training program, a 16-month, \$1.25 million contract was awarded to the National Asian Pacific American Families Against Substance Abuse (NAPAFASA) to provide training in ways to improve services for problem gamblers.

Problem gambling is defined as a pattern of gambling behavior that disrupts or compromises financial, vocational, educational, family or personal pursuits. Pathological gambling is a progressive impulse control disorder defined by the American Psychiatric Association. Both problem and pathological gambling behaviors are treatable and affect between two and four percent of the adult population.

Problem and pathological gamblers can experience psychological difficulties such as anxiety, depression, guilt, attempted suicide, or abuse of alcohol and drugs. Interpersonal problems can include lying and stealing, resulting in a breakdown of relationships. Financial consequences are substantial, including credit card debt, unpaid creditors, and impoverishment. Pathological gamblers may resort to criminal behavior to finance gambling or pay gambling debts.

The Legislature established the OPG in August 2003 with the charge of developing gambling prevention programs. The OPG develops problem gambling public awareness campaigns and supports toll-free helplines, research and training. The contract with NAPAFASA will assist the OPG to engage and involve various communities in problem gambling prevention. Funding for the OPG comes from the Indian Gaming Special Distribution Fund established with money deposited by the original twenty-six tribal gaming compacts.

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